

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
AMEMBASSY DOHA
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AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY SANA
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USCINCEUR ALSO FOR POLAD

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SUBJECT: PRESS REPORTS "REPRIEVE" FOR MIDEASTFOR: FULL TEXT

REF: KUWAIT 2260.

FOLLOWING IS TEXT FROM APRIL 27 ARAB TIMES:
QTE REPRIEVE FOR U.S. FACILITY IN BAHRAIN
BY NICK LUDINGTON
MANAMA, BAHRAIN: A SMALL BUT IMPORTANT US NAVAL INSTALLATION
HERE IN THE CENTRE OF MIDDLE EAST OIL FIELDS HAS BEEN
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REPRIEVED FROM A JUNE 30 EXPULSION DEADLINE. THE GOVERNMENT
OF THIS GULF ISLAND STATE BACKED OFF FROM ITS PULL-OUT ORDER
TO THE AMERICAN NAVY LARGELY BECAUSE OF ARAB SATISFACTION
AT PRESENT US MIDEAST POLICY, SOURCES SAID.
US AMBASSADOR WAT T. CLUVERIUS AND BAHRAIN INFORMATION
MINISTER TARIQ AL MOAYYED SAID NEGOTIATIONS ARE UNDER WAY
ON THE FUTURE OF THE AMERICAN PRESENCE IN BAHRAIN. AL

MOAYYED SAID THAT THE 1973 AGREEMENT UNDER WHICH THE US NAVY "MIDEAST FORCE" RENTS PART OF A FORMER BRITISH BASE FOR FOUR MILLION DOLLARS A YEAR "IS FINISHED."

CONSIDERATIONS

BUT HE SAID NEW TALKS ARE BASED ON THREE CONSIDERATIONS: APPRECIATION BY MOST ARABS OF WHAT THEY SEE AS A "CONSTRUCTIVE APPROACH" TO THE MIDDLE EAST BY THE US ADMINISTRATION; THE NEED FOR "STABILITY" IN THE ARABIAN GULF TO SAFEGUARD TRADE AND CRUDE OIL MOVEMENTS; AND BAHRAIN'S DESIRE TO GAIN MORE DIRECT BENEFIT FROM A US PRESENCE IN THE FORM OF TECHNOLOGY AND TRAINING. OTHER SOURCES SAID THE US NAVY HAS QUIETLY BEEN TOLD IT CAN STAY IF IT REDUCES AN ALREADY LOW PROFILE AND HELPS BEEF UP BAHRAIN'S DEFENSE FORCES.

"WE WANT THE AMERICAN BASE TO BE THERE. BUT WE WANT TO BE ABLE TO SAY THAT IT'S NOT THERE," SAID ONE BAHRAINI. THE MIDEAST FORCE IS ALREADY NEARLY INVISIBLE. IT CONSISTS OF 60-70 SHORE PERSONNEL IN AN UNMARKED CORNER OF THE FORMER BRITISH BASE WITH THE PLAIN BROWN WRAPPER NAME OF "NAVAL CONTROL OF SHIPPING OFFICE." BAHRAINI POLICEMEN CONTROL THE GATE. THE SHORE FACILITY WITH SCHOOL, SUPPLY, RECREATION AND COMMUNICATIONS FACILITIES, SUPPORTS THE MIDEAST FORCE FLAGSHIP USS LASALLE, A 520-FOOT CONVERTED LANDING CRAFT WITH A CREW OF 470, AND TWO DESTROYERS.

PRESENCE

THE BAHRAIN FACILITY IS THE ONLY PERMANENT US NAVAL STATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST. IT PROVIDES THE US WITH A PRESENCE IN THE ARABIAN GULF, INDIAN OCEAN AND RED SEA WATERS AROUND THE WORLD'S GREATEST RESERVOIR OF CRUDE OIL IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE HIGHWAYS OF OIL TO THE

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WEST AND JAPAN.

THE SOVIET UNION MAINTAINS SIX OR SEVEN COMBAT SHIPS PLUS SUPPORT VESSELS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. THE RUSSIANS HAVE BASE FACILITIES AT SOMALIA IN THE RED SEA.

TWO YEARS AGO, WITH US SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL IN THE 1973 WAR ATTACKED IN THE ARAB WORLD AND INTERNAL OPPOSITION TO AN AMERICAN "IMPERIALIST" PRESENCE IN BAHRAIN'S NEWLY-ALLOWED ASSEMBLY, THE RULER, SHEIKH ISSA BIN SALMAN AL-KHALIFA, GAVE THE US NAVY TWO YEARS EVICTION NOTICE.

NOW US DIPLOMATS AND BAHRAINI OFFICIALS NOTE "CHANGED CIRCUMSTANCES." THE UNITED STATES IS LESS UNPOPULAR IN THE ARAB WORLD. BAHRAIN'S EXPERIMENT WITH PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT WAS SUSPENDED IN AUGUST, 1975.

CLAIM

ALSO IRAN HAS NEVER ABANDONED ITS CLAIM TO BAHRAIN. AS THE IRANIANS RAPIDLY BUILD UP THEIR MILITARY POWER IN THE GULF, BAHRAINIS SEE AN ADVANTAGE IN MAINTAINING A MILITARY CONNECTION WITH A BIG POWER.

"MOST ARAB COUNTRIES LOOK FAVOURABLY ON THE CONSTRUCTIVE APPROACH OF THE UNITED STATES IN THE MIDDLE EAST," SAID AL MOAYYED.

BAHRAIN HAS A PROBLEM WITH UNDERGROUND RADICAL CELLS OF THE "POPULAR FRONT FOR LIBERATION OF BAHRAIN" DIPLOMATS SAID. THEY BLAMED IT FOR THE RECENT MURDER OF A CONSERVATIVE EDITOR.

THE US EMBASSY WAS DISTURBED LAST WEEK BY A TELEPHONED BOMB THREAT. BUT THE AMERICAN FACILITIES HAVE NEVER BEEN THE TARGET OF TERRORIST ACTS OR VIOLENT PROTEST.

AMERICANS AT THE BASE HAVE BEHAVED WELL OVER THE YEARS, NOT CAUSING SOCIAL OR CULTURAL PROBLEMS IN THE MOSLEM NATION, AL MOAYYED SAID.

NAVAL PERSONNEL AND FAMILIES ARE A MINORITY IN THE BAHRAIN AMERICAN COMMUNITY OF ABOUT 2,000. AS A MEASURE TO DECREASE EXPOSURE, FAMILIES NO LONGER ACCOMPANY MEN ASSIGNED TO BAHRAIN AND THE NUMBER OF DEPENDENTS HAS BEEN CUT FROM

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250 TO 50 IN A YEAR.

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